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Major General William J. Donovan,  
Director, Office of Strategic Services,  
Washington, D. C.

May 1, 1945

Dear General Donovan:

I received your memorandum of April 6th asking for comments upon the objectives and basic principles covered by your proposal for a central intelligence service.

This matter has received the most careful consideration in the War Department which is in entire agreement with the objective which you are seeking. Our differences, however, have to do with your method of reaching that objective.

From the War Department's point of view, it is vital that responsibility should not be separated from the authority to discharge this responsibility and since security against foreign aggression is the primary concern of the Secretary of State, the Secretary of War, and the Secretary of the Navy, it seems to me that the authority to carry out this responsibility should remain with them. The central intelligence service which you propose would subject departmental intelligence operations to the control of officers outside the Departments and not responsible to the heads of these Departments. This seems to me most inadvisable.

I agree entirely with you that coordination of the intelligence effort relating to national security must be attained, but I do not think the coordinating authority should engage in operations. The inevitable tendency would be to expand its operating functions at the expense of the operating agencies which have very definite responsibilities.

I believe, therefore, that methods of coordination and, where necessary, combined operations should be worked out directly by the Department heads who control the operating agencies and I believe that this can be done adequately and far better than has been the case in the past. Coordination of intelligence services is one of the factors to be considered in the general problem of a single Department of Defense.

For a proper system of coordination, I do not believe it either necessary or advisable to establish an independent agency or budget.

The Department of State, War Justice and the Navy have together examined the proposed central intelligence service and are in substantial agreement that it should not be considered prior to the termination of hostilities against Germany and Japan.

Sincerely yours,  
/s/ Henry L. Stimson  
Secretary of War

Copies furnished:

Secretary of State: Secretary of Navy: Attorney General.

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